

**Board of Selectmen
Special Meeting Minutes
Thursday, March 3, 2022
Preston Town Hall - Lower Level**

1. Call to Order

Sandra Allyn-Gauthier called the meeting to order at 6:00 P.M.

2. Roll Call

Members

Sandra Allyn-Gauthier
Jerry Grabarek
Ken Zachem

Also Present

Kimberly Lang, Recorder
Amy Brosnan - Parks & Recreation Director
Daniel Coley - Vice-Chairman of Parks & Recreation Commission
Mikel Brockway - a member of Parks & Recreation Commission
Diane Deedy - Library Director
Kate Allingham - President and Treasurer of the Library Board of Trustees
Mary Jo Nugent - President of the Friends of Preston Public Library

3. Meeting Minutes

a. February 24, 2022 - Special Meeting

Ken Zachem motioned to approve February 24, 2022 - Special Meeting Minutes. Jerry Grabarek seconded the motion. The motion was carried unanimously.

b. February 24, 2022 - Regular Meeting

Sandra Allyn-Gauthier noted the following corrections:

- b.** Chelsea Groton Bank - 2020-01-0001381- \$681.58
- c.** Chelsea Groton Bank - 2020-01-0000652 - \$2,156.55
- e.** Overhead Door/88 Route 2A -2018-03-0053618 - \$12.85
- f.** Overhead Door/88 Route 2A -2019-03-0053701 - \$151.72

The corrected refund amounts and accounts were noted in both the MInutes and the Motion.

Ken Zachem motioned to approve February 24, 2022 - Regular Meeting Minutes as amended. Jerry Grabarek seconded the motion. The motion was carried unanimously.

4. New Business - 2022-2023 Budget

a. Parks & Recreation

Amy Brosnan shared an overview of programs that were offered this past year. There was an online contest to try to engage residents as much as possible during the pandemic. They also hosted an in-person Summer Sizzler that offered many activities to those who attended and ended with a movie under the stars. They also offered a Senior Zumba class that was well attended. The overall budget is the same as last year, with two exceptions. The first is \$19,000 in Parks Maintenance, these funds are needed to replace the 2004 mower so that routine mowing can be done. The other area is an additional \$10,000 to Programs and Supplies. This is needed to meet minimum wage increases, the additional cost of implementing and adhering to Covid guidelines suggested by Uncas Health. Also, that amount will help keep programs affordable for struggling families. The summer program runs for 6 weeks, families are charged a nominal fee and those children who participate in the summer program that the school offers are given a discount because they are only at the Rec's program part time. The summer program is important giving children a chance to socialize after a year in isolation. The total Parks and Recreation Budget is \$141,785.

Daniel Coley, Vice-Chair of the Parks & Recreation Commission, spoke about salary considerations as the Board of Selectmen moves forward. He pointed out that hourly wages start at \$15.00, and that a staff member with 14 years of service is only earning \$1.86 more an hour. The Recreation Director is only making \$20.21 an hour. These wages are dismal compared to what area towns pay. It would be nice if the Parks and Recreation staff were able to see improvements in their wages in the coming year.

b. Library

Diane Deedy started by explaining that Building Maintenance has the largest increase due to a couple of pressing issues. The first is the eaves and soffits are rotting and need to be replaced. The most significantly damaged area is directly over the front door. The fire alarm line is tied into the Fax machine line. This is unacceptable per code and needs to be rectified. The final issue is the 1988 inefficient toilets need to be replaced. To deal with all of these items would cost \$11,050.

The Library is heated by natural gas so, more has been budgeted to meet the rising cost of natural gas.

It was then explained that as the recent pandemic continued it was clear that the role of the Public Libraries needed to change. The Public Libraries are evolving into community centers that offer programs for all ages, and meeting places for various groups from the community. With Preston's movable furniture the Library can accommodate many of the changes that are being seen. Circulation is down however, programs that the library offers are sought after by the community. In the coming year, the Library is looking for an additional \$5,000 for programs. Programs cost about \$500 each. They are hoping to offer 7 adult/teen programs for a total of \$3,500; 5 family programs for \$750; and continue with the Summer Reading program for \$1,500. Traditional programs that are offered fill up fast. So it's clear that people are looking for such offerings.

It was then stated that the Library doesn't rely solely on the town for support, that they actively pursue funds elsewhere. Last year they were able to secure \$31,000 in grants and an additional \$15,000 in donations.

They are hoping to revise their website in the coming year to reach out to the community more. They'd like the website to be more user-friendly and for patrons to be able to easily donate online.

It was stated that they are planning a fundraiser with Preston Vineyard in September, the Annual Appeal in December, and the Friends of Preston Library are planning multi-events to boost the Library's coffers.

It was also mentioned that since the Library has joined ILL Inter-Library Loan, which is an interlibrary loan system with 36 other towns, for the use of requesting books and materials; it has seen more patrons in the library. People are pleased with the service. It's a big step forward for circulation, programs, borrowed materials.

c. Miscellaneous Request

The Assessor's Budget other than salary has no significant changes. However, it is requested to ensure that \$1,500 is budgeted for legal notices. She also requested that \$5,000 be budgeted over the next 5 years for assessing personal property taxes. She feels that keeping the assessments of personal properties accurate and up to date will generate \$135,000 in revenue over that 5 year period.

Planning and Zoning only has a few minor increases. She would like to increase her hours from 16 to 18 hours a week and \$5,000 for the POCD.

Sandra Allyn- Gauthier reviewed updates from MERS and Health insurance. MERS net increase is 13.3%, while health insurance is possibly an 8% increase or \$87,000 for town employees.

d. Future Dates

It was decided that the next Budget Workshop would be Thursday, March 17, 2022, at 6:00 P.M.

5. Capital Planning

Sandra Allyn-Gauthier shared the Capital Plan Draft given to the Board of Finance in November for the group to review and discuss. She pointed out that Parks & Recs requested camera system still has no price tag, but the guardrail replacement is \$30,000. The amount needed for the Transfer Station is still unknown. After reviewing the complete list of items requested by various departments, the document will be resubmitted to the Board of Finance at their next meeting.

6. Old Business - None

7. Reports - None

8. Appointments and Resignations - None

9. Tax Refunds

- a. 75 Benjamin Road - Michele D. Spicer - \$59.13
- b. 73 Route 2 - William P. Maruzo, Jr. - 180.99

Jerry Grabarek motioned to approve tax refunds to 75 Benjamin Road - Michele D. Spicer for \$59.13 and to 73 Route 2 - William P. Maruzo, Jr. for 180.99. Ken Zachem seconded the motion. The motion was carried unanimously.

10. Correspondence

Letter from the state regarding a telephone/virtual hearing discussing taxi service increasing rates.

11. Public Comment - No public

12. Adjournment

Ken Zachem motioned to adjourn at 7:15 P.M... Jerry Garbarek seconded the motion. The motion was carried unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Kimberly Lang

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